

Abbey Garden Friends Newsletter Autumn 2025

*"Helping to keep the Abbey Garden a joy
to visit"* (9-page edition)



Early morning, Britain in Bloom judging day-all perfect



Thank You

to all the Abbey Garden Friends,
especially the volunteer gardening
crew and West Suffolk Council
gardening team who helped make
Anglia in Bloom and Britain in Bloom
judging days such a success. The
garden looked immaculate. More on
this further down....

**The announcements: Anglia in Bloom expected Thursday 4th September and
for Britain in Bloom Friday 31st October**

GREEN FINGERS CROSSED!

Important message about the annual subscription .

Dear Friends of the Abbey Garden, after considered discussion at the committee we have taken the decision to raise the annual subscription from £5 to £7 per year. The increase will take place from January 1st, 2026. The subscription has not increased since the AGF was founded.*

The reasons are simple enough. The committee steward AGF money with care and keep financial risks to a minimum, hopefully ensuring we will be around long into the future. We have closed our old website which cost money to maintain but provided little returns . We are developing a new website to better project our activities. It has a start-up cost (£450) and an annual subscription (£120 for first 2 years). As a responsible community group, we also provide insurance, (additional to that provided for our volunteer gardening team by West Suffolk Council), it covers public liabilities for the AGM, visits, meetings, walks, outreach work (£150 in 2025/26), administration (£50 a year). Discretionary sponsorship of garden related events including Bury in Bloom (£250). The membership of AGF hovers around 80 (providing about £400 a year) so barely sufficient to cover the recurring costs we have each year. We have about £4000 (to use at our own discretion) and £4000 (held by West Suffolk Council for use in consultation with them). So, it's all good financially. The money we raise by plant sales (several £1000s each year), outreach talks (£150 in 2024), ticket receipts for the summer reception (£140 or so), sponsorship of summer reception (£250) are income streams that rely on volunteers to give of their time freely to make them come about; these income lines cannot be guaranteed. Every penny we raise is used to supply the volunteer gardeners with tools/materials and the garden with plants, bulbs, artworks etc and I am sure everyone will agree this as it should be . The additional regular income (approximately £160) from the subscription increase will provide us with the means to cover our financial commitments more comfortably. To put the increase in subscriptions another way, each of us will now contribute 1.917p per day instead of 1.369p to help keep the Abbey Gardens a joy to visit. A small price indeed.

Paul Marsh, Chair Abbey Garden Friends

**Volunteer gardeners excepted*

PLEASE REMEMBER TO UPDATE YOU STANDING ORDER AT THE BANK!

ENOUGH OF THE GLOOM....LETS TALK BLOOM!



The garden was the centre of a huge amount of activity in June and July in preparation for Bury, Anglia, then Britain in Bloom. Volunteer gardeners were hard at work weeks in advance of these events removing the spring bedding, plant sales, weeding and then planting out the summer display. Simon Hobson (Parks manager Abbey Gardens ,Green Space and Heritage) described this year's planting scheme as 1980s retro –shocking orange, yellow, pink and white contrasting with acid greens and variegated foliage .Three lovely features to point out and which make this year's display so special – the immaculate grass, cut twice a week and watered constantly, the variations in height which add depth and interest and the intermingling of annuals like Cana, petunias and geraniums with the permanent planting of hydrangeas, roses, clematis, banana plants and willow(Salix) .



OUTING TO LITTLE HALL, LAVENHAM



On Monday 7th July, in beautiful weather, a group of us went to visit Little Hall Museum in Lavenham. Little Hall dates to the 14th century (if I recall the information given in the tour correctly!). For an hour we were given a most interesting tour of the Museum by Paul, our chairman, who works as a trained member of the museum guide staff.

We learned of the history of the building, of the museum, and the colourful lives of the Gayer-Anderson twins who did much work on renovating the building and establishing its collection of antiquities. Then we had “free time” (!) to wander round on our own, asking questions of our knowledgeable guides, and walking through the delightful garden.



A visit to the Guildhall café – or the other café across the street (two groups lost contact with each other!) – finished the morning off nicely. Despite having been to Lavenham many times I had not discovered this little gem of a museum, situated just off the market square, its dedicated staff and its contents.



Thank you to Dawn Butler and Melanie Lesser who volunteered to take us there as the taxi drivers, and to Paul for an excellent guided tour. I think it fair to say that a thoroughly good time was had by all.

Ian Hobley (AGF Secretary)

The Abbey Garden Friends Committee

Chair: Paul Marsh

Secretary: Ian Hobley

Treasurer: Debbie Bateson

Membership Secretary: Margaret Steavenson

Committee members: Rob Cunningham - Snell & Simon Charlton

All can be contacted via abbeygardens.bse@outlook.com

BRIEF REPORT ON PROGRESS TOWARDS OUR NEW WEBSITE

In the past few weeks Paul Marsh (Chair) and Ian Hobley (Secretary) have been working on the creation of a new web site which will better project AGF activities to a wider audience and also give members access to newsletters, events, a diary, pictures etc . We have engaged Sarah White, who runs White IT Solutions, a local IT business, to help us in this endeavour. As of August 2025, we have started to populate a draft website which we hope to be making “live “in the not too distant future. Any ideas for inclusion on the web site are welcome.



ABBEY GARDEN NIGHTINGALE POEM AND A QUIZ!

The poem was sent to the Bury and Norwich Post in August 1847 by PHILOMELOPHILES, a somewhat mysterious contributor whose name pops up now and again on various topics connected with town life. The nightingale in the poem was heard in the Bury Botanic Garden. Sadly, they are a rare bird today and not observed by any of the twitchers who contribute to eBird (<https://ebird.org/home>) about species observed in the Abbey Garden in 2025 . eBird reports 30 different bird species observed in the garden this year and 53 species in recent years, but nightingales are not amongst them.

Below are 11 (of 30) species of birds identified in the Abbey Garden this year. Your task is to attach the correct number of sightings of each bird species. No prizes for getting the most obvious.

Wren, Rock Pigeon, Common Wood Pigeon, Swift, Jackdaw, Song Thrush, Goldfinch, Robin, Blackcap, Reed Bunting, Sparrow Hawk

30 10 6 6 5 4 6 4 3 2 1 1

On hearing a nightingale in August, in the corner of the Botanic Garden.

Me rest thou dost deny, sweet Philomel !
 For whilst I dwell upon thy dulcet sounds.
 Of faithful love—of that hath no bounds,
 To my excited fancy thou dost tell of harmonies that
 mortal ne'er can raise.
 Where angels ever quire their Maker's praise.
 A transient visit thou wert wont to pay.
 Hut now, sweet bird ! thou dost prolong thy stay,
 When the ripe haws reflect the early bloom,
 To cheer our Autumn with thy melody,
 And chase away the dread of Winter's gloom
 A home preferr'd to wand'ring minstrelsy.
 Ne'er be thy strains disturbed by trespass rude!
 No rifler make thy nest a solitude !
 But all thy days be peace without alloy!
 Thy song at last in never-ending joy!
 PHILOMELOPHILES.



The nightingale photographed at Lackford Lakes, nr Bury (image courtesy TLA Photography.) Now a rare bird in Suffolk- but not so in the 19th c. Scan the QR to hear its song.



Nightingales are on the UK red list, which means they are at risk of extinction. They nest in dense scrub and best recognised by their song. They are shy birds and about the size as a robin.



THE WOLF IS HOWLING AGAIN !..... (BUT REMAINS A NO CLIMB ZONE)

Brian our resident Wuffa doctor has fixed the poor creature. It's now back on public show by the café and good for a few more years. Job well done!

SUFFOLK GARDENS TRUST TO VISIT IN 2026. We have been asked to host a visit to the Abbey Garden as part of their 2026 visit programme, and subject to the usual formalities and permissions we are delighted to accept. The date and itinerary have yet to be agreed.

HISTORICAL NOTE NO: 7 - HUBBARDS PERMAIN APPLE

Nathaniel Hodson, the founder and superintendent of the botanic garden from its formation in 1820 until his death in 1861, had a wide network of horticultural contacts. In the development of the original Bury Botanic Garden (1820-1831) he was in contact with John Lindley, Assistant Secretary of the Horticultural Society of London. In 1823 the Society*



Hodsons -Hubbards Pearmain Plate 27

had established its first garden, a 64-acre site at Chiswick on land owned by the Duke of Devonshire. The focus of the garden was on the propagation of fruit. It was the first ever systematic attempt to identify, name and cultivate British fruit. Lindley was responsible for the sourcing of plants/trees and the planting out of the new garden. Between 1828-1830 he published the Pomological Magazine, a botanical journal devoted to fruit. A compilation of the magazine was published in 1841 entitled "Pomological Britannica or figures and descriptions of the most

important varieties of fruit cultivated in Great Britain". Plate 27 is the Hubbards Pearmain Apple and was credited thus "*the specimen from which this drawing was made was communicated by N S Hodson of Bury St Edmunds.*"



Photograph of Hubbards Pearmain

A bit more about Hubbards Pearmain

The apple was a popular variety with gardeners in Norfolk and Suffolk in the late 18th and early 19thc. It was also to be found in Devonshire under the name of Golden Vining. Its flavour was considered unsurpassed, small to medium in size and pearmain shaped. Green skinned with a lot of russeting, with an occasional orange flush it was sweet, rich and complex in flavour. It is variety still obtainable from specialist suppliers.

A note on the word pearmain: permain (or other spellings) is thought to be a very old description added to apples which kept well - perhaps a corruption of the old French parmaindre "to endure" or, as some suggest, an apple which bore some resemblance to a pear. We will never know!

**Becoming the Royal Horticultural Society in 1861*

THE BIG THANK YOU TO THE ABBEY GARDEN VOLUNTEERS

AT THE SUMMER RECEPTION

Over 50 of the Abbey Garden Friends met in the water garden on Friday 29th August for a reception to thank all the volunteer gardeners who help make the garden a joy to visit. The changeable weather that day smiled on us and the rain held off. The volunteer gardeners turned out in force to enjoy the evening in the company of other supporters of the garden. Thanks are also due to the West Suffolk Council gardening team led by Simon Hobson for their support.

Here's a snap of the all the volunteers, with Diane Hinds (the Deputy Mayor) and Lynda Seldis (the volunteer gardeners' coordinator).



Answers to quiz – number of sightings on e- bird

Rock Pigeon 30, Common Wood Pigeon 10, Swift 2, Jackdaw 6, Wren 5, Song Thrush 4, Goldfinch 6, Robin 4, Blackcap 3, Reed Bunting 1, Sparrow Hawk 1.

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THE END OF THIS EDITION